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RECONVENED TECHNICAL MEETING ON THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE HELD IN ACCORDANCE WITH GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 46/128 AND 47/75

Geneva, 14-16 July 1993

Note by the Secretariat

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Introduction

1. The International Year of the World's Indigenous People was proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/164 of 18 December 1990. The General Assembly, in its resolution 46/128 of 17 December 1991, appointed the then Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights as Coordinator of the Year and assigned responsibility for implementing the activities of the Year to the Centre for Human Rights in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation. In resolution 46/128 the General Assembly also adopted the theme "Indigenous people - a new partnership", adopted a programme of activities contained in the annex to that resolution, and decided that the Coordinator should convene a technical meeting early in 1992.

2. Planning for the year is also guided by resolution 1991/57 of the Commission on Human Rights, resolutions 1990/29 and 1991/33 of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the subject of Year (A/46/543).

3. The first Technical Meeting of agencies, regional commissions and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system with representatives of States, organizations of indigenous peoples and other non-governmental organizations having a special interest in indigenous matters was held at Geneva from 9 to 11 March 1992.

4. As that meeting was poorly attended by representatives of indigenous organizations and other relevant non-governmental organizations, it was recommended that the Technical Meeting should be reconvened. The reconvened meeting was held from 3 to 5 August 1992, immediately following the tenth session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, to take advantage of the presence in Geneva of the delegates to the Working Group.

5. At the reconvened Technical Meeting indigenous representatives requested the appointment of two vice-chairpersons. Mr. Michael Dodson (Northern Land Council, Australia) and Ms. Rigoberta Menchu (International Indian Treaty Council) were elected vice-chairpersons by the indigenous delegates.

6. In its resolution 47/75 of 14 December 1992, the General Assembly requested the Coordinator to reconvene the Technical Meeting for a third time, with a view to its concluding its deliberations and finalizing the report on the outcome of the three meetings. This third Technical Meeting will consider the progress already made and plan strategies for the future beyond 1993.

7. The purposes of the Year are to strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous communities in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health and to raise public awareness of indigenous cultures through special international and national activities as set out in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/128. These purposes are to be achieved through enhancing the participation of indigenous people in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects affecting them.

8. Delegates at the previous two meetings made the point that not only should the short-term goals for 1993 be considered, but that there was also a need to work towards goals which would bring long-term benefit to indigenous peoples beyond the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. It is expected that indigenous delegates to this third Technical Meeting will wish to consider a number of long-term goals, and the mechanisms by which they may be achieved.

OPENING CEREMONIES IN NEW YORK AND OTHER CEREMONIES

9. The official opening ceremonies for the Year were held in New York, on 10 December 1992. During the opening ceremonies, 20 indigenous speakers made statements about the situation of indigenous peoples and their relationship with the world. However, this part constituted a special meeting of the General Assembly as the rules of the Assembly allow only for representatives of Governments to speak. The formal meeting was suspended to enable the indigenous persons to speak and their statements do not form part of the official record.

10. The importance of giving indigenous peoples a formal place within the international framework of the United Nations was highlighted on this occasion. The question of participation is a matter which indigenous peoples may wish to address at the reconvened Technical Meeting.

11. The opening ceremonies in the General Assembly were followed by a cultural event with indigenous entertainers and a reception.

12. The Commission on Human Rights, at its forty-ninth session, included an item on its agenda entitled "Commemoration of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People". Ms. Rigoberta Menchu in her capacity as Goodwill Ambassador for the International Year was invited to address the Commission. Twelve indigenous people also spoke under the item.

13. An item commemorating the International Year was included in the agenda of the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993, and the Goodwill Ambassador and eight indigenous people were invited to address the Conference.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

14. A number of activities have been initiated by the Centre for Human Rights, including the preparation of a world calendar of events, a newsletter, the publication of a world map indicating where indigenous peoples live, and the preparation of a number of books for publication: an international directory of indigenous organizations, a collection of extracts from speeches given at the United Nations by indigenous delegates over the past 10 years, and a manual on internal self-government.

15. The secretariat has been contacting indigenous groups for information about local activities to include in the world calendar of events, and has received a pleasing response to its requests. The secretariat has also received considerable information concerning comprehensive national programmes

and public information activities. The highlights of those programmes are included in the calendar. An updated version of the calendar is available.

16. The newsletter has been prepared and it is hoped to publish it in English and Spanish during 1993. It will contain information about activities being undertaken by the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations, as well as information about indigenous activities worldwide.

17. The international directory of indigenous organizations will contain up-to-date information about indigenous organizations throughout the world and will be an important communications and reference tool not only for indigenous peoples but for Governments and United Nations bodies.

18. The first draft of the book containing extracts of speeches has been completed and indigenous groups have been contacted for permission to quote from their statements.

19. In consultation with the International Labour Office, the Centre for Human Rights has engaged a consultant to prepare a manual on indigenous peoples and self-government. Centre staff are working closely with the consultant in researching and compiling the materials. This project is a direct response to the recommendation by indigenous peoples for the publication of such a manual. The recommendation was made at the conference concerning indigenous peoples and self-government held at Nuuk, Greenland, in September 1991, (see the report of the Meeting of Experts to review the experience of countries in the operation of schemes of internal self-government for indigenous peoples, E/CN.4/1992/42 and Add.1). The Centre acknowledges the generosity of the Danish Government in providing funding for this exercise.

20. The Centre has been successful in attracting sponsorship from the private sector for the publication of an educational resource to be used in schools. This resource is in the form of a wall chart with interesting information about indigenous peoples, superimposed upon a map of the world indicating generally where they live. Interested groups or Governments may use the art work, and adapt the text to regional requirements. Translations into local languages is encouraged.

21. There has been a great deal of interest in the Year from the general public, universities and other institutions. The secretariat has received many invitations to speak to groups about indigenous affairs and many requests for interviews from the media. The indigenous staff, in particular, are endeavouring to accept as many of these engagements as possible. Ensuring the dissemination of accurate information about indigenous peoples, their circumstances and their causes, is a secretariat priority.

THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

22. As is the usual practice for international years, the Secretary-General established the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People and appealed to Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for contributions. A target of US$ 500,000 was

set, with the intention of distributing the funds to small-scale practical projects of direct benefit to indigenous peoples, located mainly in developing countries. The projects are expected to encourage self-development by ensuring that they are planned, implemented and evaluated by indigenous peoples and be specifically designed to promote the objectives of the Year.

23. Overall, the governmental response to the Fund has been disappointing. Although three Governments have assisted the United Nations with staff and resources, and several have supported specific projects, these contributions are not associated with the Voluntary Fund. The majority of Governments have been slow to contribute to the Fund itself. On 4 May 1993, a further appeal was sent by the Coordinator to Governments requesting them to contribute. As of 31 May 1993, less than US$ 200,000 has been made available for projects, whilst the Fund has attracted project proposals valued in excess of US$ 13 million.

24. The first meeting to consider project proposals was held on 10 March 1993 to examine the 102 submissions, valued at US$ 6.4 million, received up to 28 February 1993. At that date, only $83,853 was available in the Fund for distribution to projects and only six projects, each under US$ 15,000 were recommended to the Coordinator.

25. The next meeting to consider projects will be held in August 1993. It is hoped that further contributions from Governments will have been received by that date.

26. Because of the limited funds available and to ensure that as many grants as possible may be made, it was recommended that grants should not exceed $15,000, and that no more than one project should be supported in each country. Projects were also considered against a set of guidelines which took into account such issues as the equity of distribution regionally, the major focus of projects, and the vulnerability of target groups as beneficiaries.

27. It was expected that projects would focus on one of the six categories of activities identified at the Technical Meeting held in March 1992, namely human rights, development and environment, education and culture, health, self-management and self-government, or public events and information.

28. As a means of assisting indigenous people who have submitted projects to the Fund, the secretariat has sought to involve Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in other ways. It is preparing a portfolio of projects from those received from indigenous peoples, and this will be available upon request to interested governments, private foundations and non-governmental organizations to consider whether assistance might be given more directly, through bilateral or other aid programmes. The secretariat is also following up interests in the private sector which might consider adopting projects during 1993. There are many imaginative ways that both Governments and the private sector might explore to find new ways to assist, through working directly with the communities involved.

29. The Coordinator and the secretariat for the Year, continue to urge governments to contribute to the Voluntary Fund.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

30. Indigenous people have made the point that the United Nations system, and all bodies, governmental or other, should ensure that indigenous peoples be treated as equal partners in dignity and mutual respect in all matters concerning them. In particular, it has been stressed that indigenous peoples should participate in the planning, management, execution and evaluation of projects to be carried out in the International Year. A number of initiatives have been taken to encourage the United Nations agencies to meet with indigenous peoples and develop programmes for their benefit. The Centre for Human Rights has been instrumental in organizing various meetings between the agencies and indigenous peoples.

31. Both previous Technical Meetings emphasized the need for action by the United Nations system as a whole. Many of the United Nations organizations and specialized agencies have thus appointed focal points for the International Year and are developing special activities and programmes relating to indigenous peoples during 1993. The Centre, in consultation with these organizations will be providing accessible and concise information about these programmes to indigenous peoples and communities so that they can take advantage of the opportunities they offer. The International Labour Organisation, the partner organization with the Centre for Human Rights in the coordination of the International Year, has taken several initiatives in this regard, facilitating informal contacts among the various concerned organizations.

32. Both UNICEF and the UNDP, two of the largest international organizations in the field, have established focal points and are developing informal links with indigenous people directly. The International Labour Organisation has held several consultations with indigenous people in connection with its Convention 169 and to consider future technical assistance. The World Bank has assisted a number of indigenous communities through its small grants scheme. An indigenous member of the secretariat was invited to address the World Health Assembly on behalf of the Coordinator for the International Year. It was recommended that the World Health Organization establish an advisory task force of indigenous health specialists to consider what activities it might undertake in the future. A consultation with indigenous peoples of the Arctic region is planned to be held in Siberia in early September 1993.

CONSULTATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN NEW YORK ON 11 DECEMBER 1992

33. The International Labour Organisation, together with the Coordinator, convened a one-day meeting on 11 December 1992 for an exchange of views between United Nations agencies and representatives of the indigenous peoples present in New York for the opening ceremonies of the Year. (See E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/AC.4/TM.3/1). Representatives of 12 United Nations agencies attended this meeting with the representatives of indigenous communities, and it was an important contribution to the establishment of links between them. Important information concerning access to the agencies and about their programmes was provided to the indigenous representatives. The meeting had important implications for the future development of dialogue between indigenous communities and relevant United Nations agencies.

PUBLIC AWARENESS MATERIALS

34. A number of information activities are being undertaken for the International Year. A range of public information materials, including a poster, brochures, fact sheets and a press kit containing information sheets on indigenous peoples and the issues facing them in the world today, have been produced and are available for worldwide distribution. The Department of Public Information of the United Nations has been instrumental in preparing this comprehensive range of public awareness materials for the Year, in consultation with the Centre for Human Rights. These materials are available in all the official languages through the United Nations local offices and the International Year secretariat at Geneva. The secretariat has sent over 1,000 posters to indigenous peoples' and non-governmental organizations.

35. A video showing highlights of the opening ceremonies has been prepared.

GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

36. The 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchu, from Guatemala, has agreed to be the Goodwill Ambassador for the year, to draw world attention to the Year and to the situation of indigenous peoples. It is expected that she will undertake a programme of visits to several countries specifically to highlight the Year. The purpose of these visits will be to inform people about the International Year and the opportunities it offers.

STAFFING

37. The Centre for Human Rights, which has the responsibility for the administration of the Year, has sought to employ indigenous staff. The Governments of Australia, Denmark and Norway have supported the secondment of indigenous staff to the secretariat, for the Year, which is located at Geneva. This small team is fully involved in all the projects being developed for the Year by the Centre, and in the general administration of the Year's activities. A practical programme of activities has been developed and the indigenous staff are available to advise all sectors of the United Nations on matters relating to the International Year.

OUTCOME/PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

38. Indigenous peoples are anxious to see some positive outcome from this Year. The theme is "a new partnership", and indigenous peoples have expressed the hope that the United Nations system will be committed to ensuring that there is a genuine recognition of the concerns of indigenous peoples. It was suggested that a significant outcome of the Year could be a move towards the building of a new and meaningful relationship between indigenous peoples and the United Nations.

39. Indigenous leaders have requested that events and projects specifically directed towards the celebration of the Year should be meaningful, and not just window-dressing focusing on indigenous folklore. Activities that reinforce the popular "folkloric" images that surround indigenous peoples should be avoided at all costs. There is a strong consensus that the year should support the priorities identified by indigenous peoples.

40. Many indigenous representatives have proposed the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples with official recognition within the United Nations system. Indigenous people could use such a forum to debate concerns freely and to respond to international issues in an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect. Such a forum would need to be supported by a permanent functional secretariat within the United Nations.

41. It is essential that activities and projects for the Year should aim to have an impact over many years. There are many issues common to indigenous people such as displacement from their lands, loss of property rights, and lack of respect for their cultures and the contributions that they have made to the world.

42. In this regard it may be noted that indigenous peoples have organized three satellite meetings of the World Conference on Human Rights. A meeting bringing together indigenous people of North America was held in Ottawa in April 1993. In May, a meeting was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, including indigenous people from 12 countries in Asia. In the same month, a meeting was held in Guatemala, under the auspices of the Goodwill Ambassador, of indigenous people from the Americas. A number of suggestions for long-term activities emerged from these meetings.

43. The recommendations of these meetings included the following: the establishment of a permanent institution or forum for indigenous peoples' concerns to be discussed; easier access for indigenous peoples to United Nations meetings; and the creation of an international body to assist with the settlement of disputes between indigenous peoples and States. Both the Guatemala and the Thailand meetings, as well as the NGO Committee on the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, have suggested that the United Nations proclaim a decade of the world's indigenous peoples. Linked to this idea is the suggestion that a medium-term programme be developed within the United Nations system.

44. Governments have been encouraged to support initiatives to ensure a high profile for the International Year. At the two technical meetings already held to discuss activities for the Year, Governments were urged to keep in mind that the main purposes of the Year are to further international cooperation between States and intergovernmental bodies to solve problems faced by indigenous peoples, to increase the participation of indigenous peoples in the development of projects and policies affecting them, and generally to raise the awareness of the public about indigenous people.

45. The International Year of the World's Indigenous People will end on 31 December 1993. It is important to note that what can be achieved in concrete terms in such a short time is limited. However, it is realistic to expect that the world community will be more aware of the circumstances of indigenous peoples, and will be willing to continue the dialogue that has commenced.

46. 1993 provides an opportunity to improve the information about human rights available to indigenous people, especially in their own languages, and to make special arrangements for training courses in countries and regions

where indigenous people live. The World Conference on Human Rights, being held at Vienna in June 1993, also gives an opportunity for debate on indigenous issues.

47. The International Year should be seen as the beginning of a process of guaranteeing full human rights to indigenous peoples, and of greatly increasing and improving the resources for the development of indigenous peoples.

48. It is hoped that this Technical Meeting will provide the United Nations with a plan of action for the future that will aim to ensure indigenous people a permanent forum and defined rights of participation in United Nations forums where matters affecting them are discussed.